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# City boat ramp cleanup progressing

## ■ Asbestos contamination was deeper and more widespread than anticipated

The cleanup of asbestos contamination at the city's Riverside Park is moving along according to plan and will be completed this fall, local EPA project manager Jim Christiansen said this week.

"We're basically where we expected

to be, and we're on schedule to finish it up this year," Christiansen said.

The job has gone a little slower than Christiansen had hoped because the contamination was spread over a wide area and went relatively deep into the ground.

"It's not good, but it wasn't off the chart like the screening plant or the export plant," Christiansen said.

With the excavations about 75-percent complete, the digging has gone to a 3-foot depth over most of the area, he said.

Cleanup protocols call for soil to be excavated to a depth of 18 inches or until the contamination stops. If "more than a little" contamination remains at 18 inches, the excavation will continue

up to a depth of 3 feet, Christiansen said. In rare cases where high levels of asbestos are present soil may be excavated to a depth beyond 3 feet.

The park is located next to the site of W.R. Grace's former export plant where asbestos-contaminated vermiculite was processed. Much of the contamination at the site is believed to have come from snow removal from the export plant and

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## Boat ramp—

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from material from the plant being used as fill.

Funding for the work came from the same pot of money the EPA is using to fund the cleanup of residential properties around Libby. The diversion of money earmarked for the residential cleanups is one reason the number of properties that will be cleaned this year is expected to fall somewhat short of the original goal of 200. The actual number cleaned will probably be between 180 and 190, Christiansen said.

"It's an important exposure, and I wouldn't do anything different, but it does take away from our residential work," he said.

Contamination at the site was discovered in May by crews working on the construction of a new boat ramp.